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LETTERS OF MAJOR THOMAS ROWLAND, C. S. A.
FROM NORTH CAROLINA, 1861 AND 1862

Contributed by the late MISS KATE MASON ROWLAND, LL. D.

Goldsboro, N. C., September 11, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

Aunt Laura promised to write to you upon my departure from Richmond to tell you that I have been ordered to Newbern, N. C. * * *

Tuesday evening I received an invitation to Miss Jennie Pegram's where I met most of my Richmond acquaintances. I spent a very pleasant evening, went to my hotel and packed up, and after about three hours sleep took the cars Wednesday before day. My friend Jones and I, both of the Engineers are ordered to report to Genl. Gatlin. Oweing to the peculiar arrangements of the North Carolina railroads we have to spend a day or a night at each small town on our route. Yesterday we had to spend the day at Weldon, a very uninteresting little town. Last night and to-day we are sojourners in Goldsboro, a very pretty and neat little town. We are in a very comfortable hotel, and the proprietor being kind and attentive, and Goldsboro being to-day the scene of a great militia muster, we hardly regret the delay in consideration of the anticipated entertainment.

We hear that Newbern is a very pleasant place of old Revolutionary associations, and celebrated for beautiful girls with wealthy paternals. A slight stampede among the inhabitants was caused by the advent of the enemy to Fort Hatteras, but they

are recovering confidence and I hope the young ladies will return.

I already see around me evidences of my being in the land of tar, pitch and turpentine. Endless pine forests at a respectful distance, surround the beautiful little village of Goldsboro. As I came on in the cars I could look through the window into dark and densely grown swamps, upon whose gloomy waters the sun never shines.

* * * * *

My love to the girls and all friends.

Your aff. son

T. ROWLAND.

Newbern, North Carolina, September 15, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

I wrote you a few lines from Goldsboro several days ago on my way to this place. We arrived here the day after I wrote that letter and have since been awaiting orders from Genl. Gatlin who is absent. We received a letter from him this evening. Obenchain is ordered to Washington, N. C., Jones and I are directed to report to Col. Thomson of the Engineer Department. We saw him this evening and learned from him that we are to make a reconnoissance for a military road along the Neuse, the object of which will be to send troops and artillery to the coast in case of the attempt of the enemy to land.

I am very glad that Jones and I are to be together, he being a Virginian and a West Pointer. Newbern is almost deserted at present, partly by the absence of the inhabitants at the watering places, partly by the panic. It seems to be a very genteel, quiet old place, and I hope that the ladies will return, for it will probably be our rendezvous for some time to come. We have been here several days already, during which we have occupied our time by studying, reading, and sailing on the river.

While I think of it, if you have any trunk at Warrenton, send me Davies' Surveying and Mahan's Civil Engineering, and if you could in any way come across Mahan's Field Fortifications, please send it to me. It is very difficult to find books pertaining to my profession.

I am getting to be very fond of fresh figs which are very abundant here. I think it is an acquired taste. We have no peaches but figs and grapes are very plentiful and can be bought for a trifle. Newbern is celebrated for its elm trees. Every street is shaded by an arch of beautiful trees. From the river you see apparently a forest of elms with here and there the steeple of a church or the chimneys of a tall house peering out from the mass of foliage which excludes the city from view. We went to the Episcopal Church this morning and heard a very good sermon. The congregation was very small, so many people being away. The mosquitos here form a very bad feature of the place; they are terrible, worse than I ever saw them before. My hands are almost eaten up by them.

Wednesday: I wrote this letter last Sunday; Monday morning we started down the river too early for me to put it in the office. Since then we have been very busy, going down the river every morning and returning in the evening. We are at work on the road that I told you of. We go to Fort Lane every morning in a steamboat and after our day's work return in the same manner.

[T. Rowland.]

Newbern, N. C., September 23, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

I have just received orders to report to Col. Johnson at Fort Johnson, Wilmington, N. C. Just as I am fixed comfortably in Newbern with Jones, I am compelled to leave. However as I have no family to carry with me it does not make any difference. I only regret that he does not go too. We are getting to be such inseparable friends that it will be disagreeable to part. But I have no doubt I shall find pleasant people and good friends at Wilmington as I have at every post at which I have been during the war. The weather has been very warm here, but it has suddenly changed in consequence of a North-Easter, and is now quite cold.

Jones and I have had very hard work here, sometimes walking for miles through forests and thickets, and sometimes stand-

ing all day on the parapet of a fort in the broiling hot sun arranging apparatus for aiming the 32 pdr guns. (The gunner is level, and the breech sight are [sic] not to be had, so we have to arrange a new method of aiming the heavy guns.)

McLeod Turner one of my schoolmates at Hallowel's, is Captain of a company at Fort Macon.

[T. Rowland.]

Fort Johnson, N. C., October, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

I wrote to you the night before I left Newbern to tell you of my change of Post. I have since received yours of the 23d, the first letter I have had from any one since I have been in North Carolina. I met Capt. Smith the morning after I arrived in Wilmington. He has been sick for a week and is not yet well enough to do any duty. He is ordered here to construct some defensive works at Fort Johnson, and I was to have assisted him. He is the same Smith of the Army that you met last winter in Detroit; he speaks a great deal of the pleasant times he had with you all during the winter. I brought a letter to him from Uncle Robert. Fort Johnson is one of the coast defenses of N. C., guarding the approach by water to Wilmington. There are no fortifications here at present. Fort Caswell, about three miles distant, stands between us and the sea. The latter is strongly fortified and probably able to resist any attack that can be made by sea. It guards the mouth of the main Inlet. Batteries at Confederate Point guard the approach by New Inlet.

The lighthouse displays a flag whenever the U. S. vessels of war are in sight. The flag is seldom down. Four or five steamers are generally hovering around to enforce the blockade. A privateer went out yesterday, however. I am boarding with a graduate of the V. M. I. Capt. Smith has just arrived. We go to work to-morrow on the fortifications.

Fort Johnson, N. C., October 13, 1861.

My dear Lizzie:

I believe that quite a week has expired since I despatched my last letter to Warrenton. I am glad to hear that you antici-

pate a pleasant month at the Springs, and hope that when the month is over you will be able to return safely to the Cottage. Capt. Smith and I are progressing in the erection of our batteries at this place. I am very much pleased with the Engineers Corps as far as my experience goes. The duties are quite agreeable to my taste, scientific without being sedentary. The junior officers, moreover, are more independent, and less restricted by the authority of superiors than in the line of the army where all are subject to a severe regimental discipline. My rank is not what I am entitled to but that does not make much difference; a more serious objection to my position is that my pay is a mere pittance insufficient for my support, incurring as I necessarily do,—the same expenses and discharging the same duties as a lieutenant.

With much reluctance I wrote to the President requesting some other position, and I hope that I will be enabled to be of some assistance to mother during the winter. I wrote to the President myself because I think it is always best to ask a favor directly. If you do it through a friend you annoy two persons instead of one, and if a request is reasonable and just in itself, it needs no influence to second it. I feel assured that mine is both reasonable and just.

Quite an amusing circumstance happened while our first battery was in process of construction. The overseer superintending the negroes employed in throwing up the parapet of sand had, it seems, made some remarks derogative to the character of three young women in Smitheville. Whereupon the offended parties marched out one fine evening, armed with cow-hides, stormed our battery in rear, and gave the fellow a good trouncing, much to the surprise of the negroes.

I have commenced reading Rollin's Ancient History, the only useful book that I can get hold of. We play whist a great deal in the evenings with the officers of the 10th Regiment. I have made no acquaintances in Smitheville; in fact there are very few people in the town. It is a summer resort for many of the inhabitants of Wilmington, but in these times they don't like to be so near the coast. I suppose Mason has by this time received his commission in the Navy.

[T. Rowland.]

Fort Johnson, Oct. 18(?) [1861]

I am boarding at a house kept by old Mrs. Stewart and her daughters. It is right on the shore of the inlet and just beyond that is the broad Atlantic. Here for the first time I have heard the roaring of the sea. My roommate is named Parker; he is from Missouri though he has relations in Norfolk and is a graduate, as I said, of the V. M. I. He is the soul of a gentleman and has good morals and habits, which it will please you to know. He was formerly in the Provisional Army, Va., and distinguished himself in a rencontre between the U. S. Steamer *Monticello* and a battery under his command. He is thrown out of service by the bursting of the Old Dominion Bubble and takes refuge in N. C. as a drill master. He proposes to raise a battalion for the war and offers me the Adjutancy. I will wait till it is raised. We are intimate friends and sympathize with each other in the misfortune of low rank and low pay. A little grumbling does one's heart good.

By the way my accommodating landlord in Newbern, because I did not finish my month with him, charged me \$20.00 for twelve days besides a handsome item for washing.

* * * * *

The officers here are very pleasant gentlemen. Iverson of the U. S. Cavalry was in the same regiment with Frank Wheaton, Sumner's. He is Colonel of the 10th Regiment of North Carolina Volunteers and commands the post. A Virginian is the Adjutant of the regiment.

I hope the girls and yourself will winter in the Cottage and that I may spend Christmas with you.

Your aff. son

T. Rowland.

Fort Johnson, N. C., Oct. 21, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

It is a cold, rainy Monday, the first chilly day of the season. Capt. Smith left yesterday to be absent for a week or two, leaving me to complete the batteries during his absence. He has

been ordered by Genl. Anderson to make a reconnaissance at some point north of this upon the North Carolina coast. He was furnished with an escort of cavalry. My friend, Capt. Parker has gone too. He has been ordered to Wilmington to drill a company of light artillery. I heard a most excellent sermon yesterday from a celebrated Methodist minister. He is one of the best preachers I have ever listened to, because he employs all his talents to enforce the truth of the gospel rather than to dazzle his hearers with a brilliant sermon.

What has become of Aunt Emily? She will get home eventually, I suppose if she has to come via the Rocky Mountains. I am delighted to hear that you have met my friend Lieut. Berney. He is a pleasant fellow, and we have lightened many a lonesome hour together in our tent at the Fair Grounds. I never met a young man in whom I could see less to condemn than in Berney. Frank, open hearted, generous and impetuous, he is a true type of a Southerner and a most agreeable companion.

[T. Rowland.]

Fort Johnson, N. C., Nov. 10, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

* * * * *

I met Pinkney Mason very unexpectedly. He is ordered to Fort Fisher seven miles from Fort Johnson to drill in heavy artillery. He has grown very much since I last saw him; he is nearly as stout as Landon. I have nearly finished the batteries here; I think they will be completed in a week or ten days. I have never told you anything about the old lady that I am boarding with. She is quite a curiosity. She has some rather masculine characteristics, one of which is a propensity to enforce her rights with a cudgel whenever it is necessary. She swears a little when she is angry, and would not be called refined or fashionable by the least fastidious but she can boast a better heart and more charity than many a lady who has a good education and greater opportunities for doing good. Alone and unaided she has supported a large family until they are now able to support themselves. She now keeps this boarding-house with the assistance of

two of her daughters, one of them a buxom widow and the other a fine looking young woman still unmarried, but likely to be soon applied for by the Surgeon of the 10th Regiment. Old Mrs. Stuart is known to everyone who ever visited Fort Johnson. Upon one occasion she was elected to the office of town commissioner in Smitheville and actually served in that capacity.

Your aff. son

T. Rowland.

Fort Johnson, N. C., December 1, 1861.

I am delighted to hear of Aunt Emily's safe arrival in the South. It makes me sick to hear of the Cottage being occupied by Federal officers. I should like to disturb their arrangements by kicking them out. Poor Aunt Betsy! I know she has "gone where the good niggers go." She was a good old soul and a true friend of the family.

Fort Johnson, N. C., Dec. 10, 1861.

My Dear Aunt:

I congratulate you upon your safe arrival in the Southern Confederacy. Quite a change has taken place since you left Dixie last May. The gathering clouds have burst in furious storms, at Bethel, Manassa, Springfield and other places rendered illustrious by the success of Southern arms. We have had our reverses too, but even these have not been inglorious. Rich Mountain stands as a living monument to the memory of the brave patriots who fell overwhelmed by superior numbers and betrayed by a treacherous countryman. Hatteras and Port Royal fell before a powerful navy, but what can they do with these if Fortress Monroe has brought them nothing but the battle of Bethel.

Nations are as obstinate as individuals, and perhaps not until they have expended all their resources and ruined themselves by their efforts, will the Northern People discover too late that which the history of our common ancestors ought to have taught them, that a people fighting for their liberties cannot be conquered.

In the meanwhile we must suffer many inconveniences, but we can bear them cheerfully in such a cause. You have heard that

the Provisional Army of Virginia, a military blunder of our Convention, has been dropped. I have been compelled to accept a cadetship, being under age, while others of my classmates have been appointed lieutenants. I am therefore deprived to a great extent of the means of assisting my mother and sisters. Capt. Parker, a graduate of the V. M. I., whose acquaintance I have made while in North Carolina, has some prospects of receiving the command of a battalion of Artillery. He has promised in that event to have me appointed his Adjutant with the rank of 1st Lieutenant in Volunteers. I am afraid it is doubtful whether he will be able to accomplish his object, but if he can possibly get me the appointment I know he will do so.

Fort Johnson, N. C., Dec. 15, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

I have finished the batteries here with the exception of the turfing which will take several weeks more, and then I will be done with Fort Johnson. We expect to have a very pleasant Christmas here. We can enjoy Christmas no matter where we are, but still there is nothing like a Christmas at home.

It is melancholy to think of our pleasant neighborhood being desolated by the presence of a hostile army, our houses defaced and our trees cut down. There where only a year ago all was as peaceful and quiet as paradise on earth, all is now the tumult and disorder of Yankee camps, while the owners of the land are exiles from their homes.

You must not expose yourself too continuously to the fatigue and impure air of the hospital. Take a little holiday occasionally with Mrs. Randolph or Mrs. Foote. If you confine yourself too much to the hospital you will get sick yourself. I have been reading a Manual of Military Surgery for want of something more appropriate to my profession. The principal objection to this post is that I have no books to read, at least nothing of a substantial nature. I was delighted with Voltaire's Charles XII. It is very easy French. I read without any dictionary and found no difficulty in doing so.

Fort Johnson, N. C., Dec. 23, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

The *Theodora* ran into this port last week, passing right by the Blockader which did not have its steam up. The *Theodora* had no guns, but she whistled in defiance at every shot fired by the Blockader. The latter gave chase as well as she could with her scant supply of steam, but the *Theodora*, one of the fastest steamers on the Continent, was soon safe under the guns of Fort Caswell. It was a very exciting race. We could see it distinctly from both Forts, and hear the booming of the enemy's guns, answered by the shrill and defiant whistle of the *Theodora* "Catch me if you can." The *Theodora*, whose name is now historical, is the same boat that carried Mason and Slidell to Havanna. She brought in a small cargo of salt, coffee, oranges, pineapples and bananas. I wish I could send you some of the fruit.

Your aff. son

T. Rowland.

Fort Johnson, N. C., Dec. 26, 1861.

My Dear Mother:

I spent quite a pleasant Christmas yesterday. We all got up at daylight, and the young ladies made us a bowl of egg nogg before breakfast. Mrs. Stuart's youngest daughter Kate has come home from school to spend the holidays, bringing one of her schoolmates with her. They brought their guitar with them. They sing and play very sweetly. We are to have a party to-night with tableaux. The weather is warm and pleasant. I am writing in room without a fire, and a full-blown rose is lying on my mantlepiece, which was pulled yesterday in the garden. It was the rose, not the mantlepiece as my last sentence indicates, which was pulled in the garden. I send a few leaves of the former.

Christmas a year ago I dined with Dora in Newark. To-day Newark is in a foreign and hostile country. What a change! Much love to the girls. A merry New Year to all.

Your aff. son

Thomas Rowland.

(To be Continued)